

# Grand Avenue widening plan emphasizes safety

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Residents can meet next week with officials and comment on the state transportation department's planned changes for Grand Avenue, which include widening into, but not eliminating, the median in the Sun City area.

The plan is to widen Grand Avenue while protecting the safety of pedestrians and traffic along Grand Avenue, said Tim Tait, community relations director at the Arizona Department of Transportation.

"With the project to widen US 60/Grand Avenue from 83rd Avenue to Loop 303, most of the widening will occur into the median with some expansion to the outsides," Tait said. "This will somewhat reduce the size of the median - an important aesthetic element of Sun City - but will not eliminate it. We anticipate providing space at intersections through Sun City for pedestrians to wait; these spots will also include push-buttons to activate the traffic signal."

Along with the widening, ADOT also will include rubberized asphalt to help reduce noise for drivers and those who live, work and recreate nearby, Tait said.

ADOT has two efforts scheduled to ease traffic congestion that will be under way beginning next year. Both will allow for expansion without widening intersections in the Sun Cities or encroaching on private property to the north or south of Grand Avenue.

The first project will be to upgrade Grand Avenue going in each direction from 83rd Avenue to Loop 303, making it a six-lane principal arterial street, Tait said.

That project will begin in 2009 and is scheduled to be completed by 2011.

The other project will target areas along Grand Avenue from the Loop 101 to the Loop 303 and will draw on \$64 million from the 20-year voter-approved Regional Transportation Plan for unspecified improvements.

Tait said community members can voice their opinions on the projects at public forums beginning Tuesday.

The first forum will be from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave., in Sun City.

There will be a second forum that same day from 6 to 8 p.m. at El Mirage Elementary School, 13500 N. El Mirage Road in El Mirage.

The final forum will be from 6 to 8 p.m. April 1 at Valley Vista High School, 15550 N. Parkview Place in Surprise.